

14th meeting of the Budapest Group of Senior Officials

19-20 October 2006, Istanbul

Meeting Conclusions

1. The 14th meeting of the Budapest Group of Senior Officials was held in Istanbul on 19-20 October 2006, hosted by the Turkish Chair and gathered representatives of Armenia, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland (EU Presidency), Georgia, Germany (up-coming EU Presidency), Hungary, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Macedonia (FYR), Moldova, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, as well as the CIS Executive Committee, European Commission, European Commission Delegation to Turkey, Interpol, IOM, UNHCR, and ICMPD, as Secretariat of the Budapest Process.
2. In his opening statement Ambassador Kanbay of Turkey emphasised the multifaceted aspects of the migration phenomenon and the need for a multilateral approach, involving countries of origin, transit and destination when dealing with this phenomenon as well as the importance of responsibility and burden sharing. He also noted that one of the best ways to tackle illegal migration is to open channels for legal, regulated migration.
3. In the opening session, Dr. Pahr, former Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs, recalled the background and development of the Budapest Process since its inception in 1991 and gave an overview of the evolving irregular migration challenges that have been addressed in the framework of the Process. Hungary reiterated its support to the Process and put an emphasis on the continuity in its new capacity as Co-chair. Finland presented the main priorities of its EU Presidency concentrated around: legal migration, return, voluntary return and readmission, combating of illegal migration and human trafficking and control of migration flows, and asylum policy. The European Commission expressed its appreciation for the working methodology of the Budapest Process with its capacity to re-direct its topical, as well as geographical focus, as demonstrated by the successful re-direction of the Process to involve the countries of the CIS.
4. Participating States emphasised their support for the Budapest Process as a state-driven informal and flexible mechanism for addressing new challenges in the field of migration through the exchange of information, experience and good practices in an atmosphere of trust. Through its practical approach it serves to promote co-operation among countries of origin, transit and destination and harmonisation of policies.
5. The active involvement of the present and future EU Presidencies in the Budapest Process activities was encouraged, both with regard to the implementation of the adopted Activity Plan for 2007 and preparations of future meetings of the Budapest Group of Senior Officials.
6. Participants took note of the Activity Report for 2005 and the first half of 2006 and the presentations of the Secretariat, Bulgaria, Czech Republic and Armenia on the main results of the Working Group meetings.

7. In the preparation and implementation of the work plan the Secretariat is tasked to ensure that the topics to be addressed are relevant, practical and complementary and is encouraged to consider partnership with other organisations and processes. The draft Activity Plan for 2007 was presented by the Secretariat as follows:
- the **Workshop on Regularisation** will focus on the situation in Kazakhstan as a main receiving country in Central Asia and will provide a platform for experience exchange on a case by case basis and examine the effects of regularisation on other neighbouring countries;
 - the **Working Group on Irregular Migration from, to and through South Eastern Europe** will continue to serve as an exchange mechanism on strengthening the exiting capabilities on the prevention of irregular transit migration; more specifically address smuggling and trafficking in human beings; the various irregular migration routes and in particular the maritime routes; as a tool in gathering intelligence;
 - the **Working Group on Development of Migration Systems** serves as a platform for exchange of experience and good practices in developing comprehensive migration systems. The national migration policy objectives to regulate and control immigration and/ or protect the rights of the own citizens wishing to migrate should be reflected in the set-up of the migration system. The experiences of the new Member States of the EU in their transformation process are of particular relevance in this regard. The next meeting of the Working Group is to focus on the development of visa policy and identity documents;
 - the **Working Group on Return and Readmission** deals with practical problems related to the implementation of return decisions, from the perspective of both sending and receiving countries, as well as to the bilateral co-operation between services also with regard to third country nationals. It will more specifically look into the practical implementation of the EU Readmission Agreements (with Albania and Russia, as well as the forthcoming agreement to be concluded with Ukraine) and the implications for those states with which further bi-lateral agreements need to be concluded; innovative approaches in this area (re-integration measures; partnership agreements; linkages to development assistance, etc.);
 - the meeting on **trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation** will look into the three main elements of anti-trafficking measures, i.e. prevention, protection and prosecution from the perspective of labour exploitation. It takes into account the growing importance of this phenomenon for the countries of the CIS region, as well as for other Budapest Process participating States and the need for exchange of experience with regard to definition, identification, protection needs, etc.
 - the **Working Group on Irregular Movements and Asylum** examines the nexus between the two phenomena. Possible topics for discussion were the monitoring of the implementation of negative asylum decisions; secondary movements; the influence of the victim protection clauses of the Council of Europe Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings on the asylum procedure; mixed flows; misuse of the asylum procedure (for example through the airport procedure);
 - The **meeting on Integration** will examine existing models of integration in the context of comprehensive migration policies, the institutional set-up in various administrations and the linkages to other policy areas.
8. Participants agreed to continue addressing issues related to legal migration, in the framework of the existing Working Group on Immigration and Admission Policies or any other relevant activity. Other areas of interest for participating States, which can be

addressed in one form or another in the framework of the Process include issues related to problems which might arise in the national labour market as a result of migration; the role of the informal sector of the economy; the links between migration and development and the importance of institutional and capacity building programmes, as well as training and knowledge transfer in the field of migration, as part of a development strategy; the need for accurate and comparable data and statistics, etc.

9. The proposed activity plan and budget were adopted by participating States.
10. Participants received positively the additional focus provided by the Turkish Chair, related to irregular migration pressures in the Eastern Mediterranean region. It was recognised that the alleviation of such migration pressures was beyond the capacity of a single country thus requiring common policy responses and co-ordinated action in the spirit of partnership and burden-sharing.
11. Participating international organisations expressed their interest in continuing their supportive involvement in the activities of the Process. The CIS Executive Committee underlined the security aspects of irregular migration and the importance of continued co-operation. Interpol illustrated in a few examples links between the practical aspects of law enforcement and the national migration policy formulation and emphasise the importance of intelligence work and police co-operation to the work of the Budapest Process. IOM reconfirmed the importance of focusing on labour migration, referring to the Handbook on Labour Migration produced together with OSCE and ILO, and the need for improving mechanisms for collection and sharing of data and statistics. UNHCR underlined the importance of ensuring the protection needs of refugees and the efficiency of asylum and migration systems to avoid abuse.
12. The participants thanked Turkey for hosting the meeting and the Secretariat at ICMPD for the extensive substance preparations and excellent arrangements.